

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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FOUND AND LOST.

The toll of the dreary years is over,
Past are the waves of the perious sea;
Home have I come, the exile, the rover—
Aho, hast thou no welcome for me?
Part is the labor, the part is the danger;
Sweet was the suffering, sweet for thee;
Spite of course between us, thou ne'er wert a
stranger—

Never, my darling, wert far from me!

Near to me ever thy bright eyes beaming,
Shone like a star o'er my dreary way;
They tried me to labor; all holy dreams
They bade me cease, and with deeds obey.
For oft my spirit grew faint with longing,
Sad despair to my soul would come,
And of there mocked me, like phantoms
throning.

Visions of lost delights of home.

Bitter it was, unfriended, lonely,
Unknown, in that unknown land to be;
One thought uplifted me, and but one only;
Darling, was it not all for thee?

Earth and hell, they now are over,
Now that I fold thee close to my heart;

What was the past but a veil to cover

The light of those joys which shall ne'er
depart?

Has it not gone beyond all returning?

Weep not, then, for the past, O sweet!—
Pride and joy in my bosom are burning—
See, the treasure I place at thy feet!
True, it is only dust; I know it;

Idle wealth, but then gained for thee;

I did but look at the feet to throw it;

Sprang not this offering, love, from me!

What! "not worthy of me," my Alice?

Alas, my queen with the golden hair!
The sunbeam trembles in shame as he dallies—
Dull with these, so proudly fair!

What! "not worth" bark baw, at thy jesting;

The birds laugh low to the laughing breeze;

Bind the shade on thy bright face resting!

Tears—say, mock me not, love, with these!

Speak to me, sweet—O resource me,

Press thy lips to this fevered brow!

Idle must be the fear that comes o'er me,

Even an more can stand suff'ring now!

Alas, my own, what word has thou spoken?

"Seek another more worthy than this!"

The love departed," our voice all broken!

Speak, my Alice, it cannot be!

Listen, my own through all that befell me,

Strength to suffer I found in thy love—

Cruel, oh, darling, tell me,

Hopes to find most all idle prove?"

Better far it were to have perished,

"Whined in the waves of the kindly sea,

Than thus to have lost the art that I cherished,

Alas, my life was only in this!

THE WHITE SLAVE.

A Tale of the Mexican Revolution.

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,

BY EMERSON BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF "ADMIRAL BELL," "PHANTOM OF THIS FOREST," "FLAME FLOWER," "CLARA MOLINA," "FADING WILL," ETC.

[Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1866, by Emerson Bennett, a citizen of the United States, in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CHAPTER XXI.

IN LOVE.

On awaking the next morning, I found a new and comfortable suit of clothes in the place where I had left my old ones; and I might conjecture that the good Father Gabriel had been present during my sleep, seeing after my temporal, if not spiritual, welfare. Believing they were intended for me, I put them on, and found them a very snug fit. So, I went away, what against my conscience to think that I might wear them in deadly conflict with the friends of those who had provided them; but I am a man now comitted to war with the religion that I should be acting according to duty and ready for the future warfare of Mexico.

After sipping a refreshing cup of chocolate, which a servant brought to my chamber, I made me toilet, and repaired to the saloon where I found Father, who had risen before me, in close conversation with Father Gabriel. On seeing me both came forward, and after the first exchange of friendly greetings, the priest observed:

"My son, you look every way improved from your appearance last night."

"And I assure you, good father, I feel as

much improved as I look." I cordially replied; "and I beg leave, for the present, to tender you my thanks for the agreeable change, hoping it may some time be in my power to serve you in return."

"My son," pursued the priest, in a low tone, "I have learned, from Dona Eugenia and your friend here, that it is really your intention to follow your comrades."

"I think it my duty to go forward; and though you are opposed to my cause, I trust you are too generous a man to take advantage of my frankness and put insurmountable obstacles in my way."

"But mark you, my son!" returned Father Gabriel, seriously; "I have taken more than a passing interest in you; and as you would only go forward to certain death, I feel that my conscience would approve of my disengagement."

"But you will not, father!" said I, laying my hand upon his arm.

He looked at me steadily in the eye for a few moments, while his fingers played nervously with the cross at his girdle; and then glancing cautiously around, he lowered his voice, and said:

"You are a gallant young man, and I honor you for it. Were I not a priest, I should be a soldier; and were I soldier, I should fight only for the freedom of Mexico."

"How?" exclaimed I, in surprise, glancing from her priest to my friend, whose quiet smile assured me that the sentiments of the former were not unknown to him.

"Even so," said Father Gabriel, grasping my hand. "I am with you, heart and soul, and so is Father Fabian, and many others I might name. But not a word of this as you value our lives! for we are surrounded by Royalists, who, if they could read our hearts, would not scruple to harshly punish us. General Mina has more sympathizers, my son, than he is aware of; but many of them have fortunes and families; and until they can see a hope of triumph for the Patriots, they fear to hazard life, fortune, and friends."

"But if they would boldly forward, we could certainly conquer," said I.

"The whole is made up of parts—an army of individuals," answered the priest; "and as each part is not the whole, each individual not the army, so each part only in himself so small a part that he knows his own personal aid can give no certainty of success, and he fears to stake all he has on so desperate a venture. Only General Mina is fortunate enough to win one great battle, and within a month from that date he will shall count his army by thousands instead of hundreds."

"Then so much the more need that we hasten forward to lead him on," said I. "But, good father, you talked very differently to me last night—were you then afraid to trust me?"

"I thought as well as to try you, my son, for we cannot be too cautious in these troublous times."

He then said if we had determined to go forward—a proceeding which he would not advise—for though wedded heart and soul to our cause, he was not blind to its dangers, and this appeared to him like a deliberate, certain sacrifice—we should find a couple of high-spirited horses in the stable, which we could at any time take away on pretence of going forth merely for a short ride.

"We must keep up appearances," pursued the priest, "for every household may have its eyes; and therefore when you depart, let there be nothing to indicate that you do not intend to return in a few hours; and the less you say of your intentions to any one, the better for us."

At the moment Dona Eugenia entered the hall, followed by Dona Lucrecia and both came forward and cordially embraced us in the true Spanish fashion. Next came Anna and Benita, hand in hand both simply but neatly dressed, and both looking somewhat pale and sad, but very lovely.

Ours was the warm greeting and cordial embrace of the sunny clime of the South; and as I held Benita to my heart, I felt her light form tremble and experienced emotions mixed that there was no mistaking. I remembered how soon we were to part, perhaps never to meet again on earth, and for the time I found my resolution wavering under the temptation to remain and be happy with one who loved me with all the fervor and devotion of the first and only love of a noble and true hearted girl. Involuntarily, as I reflected, I sighed, and the bearing tones of Benita gave a gentle but silent response. Drawing me a little aside, she whispered:

"Dear Edimondo, I know all. You are going to leave me soon, and I have not forebodings that I shall never behold you again."

"Do not despair, dear Benita," I replied, "but hope for the best—hope for a glorious morning and a jubilant returning for the free dom of Mexico!"

"How canst thou go, dear Edimondo? You are locked up as dead as your comrades—your superiors could avail them but little—and besides, as there are two days in advance, and marching rapidly over a wild country, surrounded by their foes, how can you and your friend expect to find them without a guide, or undertake them without a rider of horses?"

"I feel it is our duty to make the attempt, Benita, and for the rest we must trust to that overruling Providence whose will is fate. We

shall need no guide to enable us to follow the broad trail of three hundred mounted men; and though they are two days in advance, yet I think we can travel enough faster to overtake them within a week at least."

"But the country swarms with your enemies, and if you fall into their hands I fear you will be slain at once."

"There is danger on the route, dear Benita, I will not deny; but honor, which is dear to every man who has a soul above baseness, impels it is our duty to follow after our noble leader, because of the weakness of his forces. Had he gone forward with a conquering army, to march in triumph upon the Capital, no ambition for glory and fame should tempt me to follow him; and I would gladly remain with one whom sweet presence I had a happiness that I have never found elsewhere, but even as he is his strength betrayed by some in whom he puts faith—deserted by others—feel in honor bound to hazard all. I hold dear and give him my noble support at any sacrifice."

"And great is the sacrifice, dearest Benita," continued I, leading her to a distant seat, placing myself by her side, and speaking in the low, tremulous tones of deep emotion; "great is the sacrifice I make in leaving you, who feel so deep a personal interest in my welfare, and in whose sweet presence I had a joy that has long been a stranger to my heart."

"Oh, these words from you, who have so nobly saved me from a life of servitude and misery!" murmured Benita, clasping her hands and raising her soft, dark eyes to mine, with a look of rapt devotion. "May the great God, the saints, and all holy intelligences bless and preserve you!" she continued with fervor. And then taking a small golden crucifix and chain from her neck, a present from Dona Eugenia, she placed it around mine, and added: "Let this be your amulet of safety, which has been specially blessed in the name of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe!"

"Though not of your faith, dearest Benita," said I, "and though not possessing your belief in the virtue of this token, yet as the gift of one bright being whom I need not scruple to say I hold dearer than any other on earth, I will ever next to my heart and sacredly guard it with my life."

"Dear Benita," I continued, quietly taking her hand, while she looked down and trembled violently, "we are about to part—and when and where we may meet again, the great God only knows; but I would say with my farewell, that you have inspired a love which no vicissitudes of life can ever change. As men count time, it is true, we have known each other but a few hours; but that time has been sufficient to show each the soul of the other, and make known the fact which years could no more dispel, that we both love with that love which, through its purity, is sacred even among angels. I will not at this moment conceal from you that I care for another—or at least thought I did—and loved more widely, more passionately, more madly than now, but it was a fierce, jealous, exciting passion, which could never have brought contentment and happiness; even had it not been upon an earthly object."

"And that love, or mad passion?" I went on, "after reading and reading my very soul, was one of the means of causing me to leave my native land, and seek relief for an aching heart in the wild strife of war, on a foreign soil, little caring whether I might win sudden fame or fall an early grave. With all my early hopes blasted, my faith in the truth and devotion of woman weakened, I almost swore I would never trust my affections to another of the female sex; and that resolution remained unshaken till chance or Providence threw us together."

"You remember how we met—you know what followed that meeting. I found in you a poor, miserable orphan like myself, even more cast off from the world than I, and that evoked sympathy, with the sweet thrill of something pure and sacred; and then love, with the holiness of something heavenly, and the more I looked upon you, talked with you, and studied your very heart, your innermost being, the more I became satisfied that if truth and purity were not to be found in you, these noble virtues were not in any woman born. Notwithstanding my sad experience in the desert and below-headlands of mankind, I thank Heaven I can honestly and conscientiously say, I do not believe it possible for Benita Mina to play me false under any circumstances; and if I thought otherwise, I would incur danger for danger's sake, and kiss the scylla or礁 which will answer me."

"You remember that morning, I found in you a poor, miserable orphan like myself, even more cast off from the world than I, and that evoked sympathy, with the sweet thrill of something pure and sacred; and then love, with the holiness of something heavenly, and the more I looked upon you, talked with you, and studied your very heart, your innermost being, the more I became satisfied that if truth and purity were not to be found in you, these noble virtues were not in any woman born. Notwithstanding my sad experience in the desert and below-headlands of mankind, I thank Heaven I can honestly and conscientiously say, I do not believe it possible for Benita Mina to play me false under any circumstances; and if I thought otherwise, I would incur danger for danger's sake, and kiss the scylla or礁 which will answer me."

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with one who is at best but a homeless adventurer?"

"Yes, dear Edimondo, all—all—everything!" she eagerly replied. "Oh, can I go? will you take me with you?"

"No, no, dear Benita—I would not be so selfish, so cruel, even were I bound for scenes of peace and safety, instead of scenes of war and peril! No, thank God! you have found a home and friends; and however adverse my own fate may be, it will always give me a bright joy, even in the darkest hour of gloom, to know that the dearest prize I have on earth is safe!"

"But, dear Edimondo, if you can find pleasure in thinking that I am safe, do not forget that for me, as regards yourself, there will be a long, sad, dreary uncertainty—and I may never hear from you again, nor hear that which will make me a wretched mourner the rest of my days!"

"Let us hope for the best, dear Benita. The thought of parting from you is very painful—but I could never feel disconsolate—should I remain here, forever alone?"

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5.

could not get the idea out of my head that the Ladyday's note had reference to some way to my approaching visit to Blair.

I found Cliff Cottage without difficulty. It was pleasantly situated on the outskirts of the town, and formed one of two small semi-detached houses standing quite alone in gardens of their own. The other house, as I was not long in learning, was tenanted by Brackenridge the chemist, whose shop was half a mile away in the town. Mrs. Jakesway was a clean, apple-faced, motherly little woman, brisk and busy from morning till night, with an intense pride in her neat little house, and a particular weakness on the subject of chimney ornaments and anti-measures, of which articles she possessed sufficient to stock a house six times as large as her own. "Law bless you, sir!" she said, when I had introduced myself and made known my business, "why, I had a note from Mrs. Winch only half an hour ago, telling me, I suppose, that you were about to call, and that you were a respectable gentleman; but I can see that well enough by your looks. I have not lived in the world all this time without having my eyes about me; and if the rooms suit you, I shall be very glad, and will do my best to make you comfortable."

"But if you have received Mrs. Winch's note, you of course know what she says," I replied.

"No, that I don't," answered the little woman, as sharp as a needle; "for, as it happens, I mislaid my spectacles this morning, and I might just as well try to fly as to read that scrawly spider sort of writing without 'em. I know the note was from Mrs. Winch, because Jerry brought it. Here it is, sir, and I shall take it as a favor if you will just read it out loud, and let us hear what the widow says to say. A very decent respectable woman is Mrs. Winch, and everybody in Normanford will tell you the same thing."

She held out the note as she spoke. "But there may be something in it," I remonstrated, "intended for your eye alone."

"Don't you think anything of the kind, sir?" said the little woman emphatically. "There's no secrets between Mrs. Winch and me; and I shall just take it as a favor if you will read it out loud."

She was so urgent on the point that I could not well refuse to comply with her request; so I took the note, carelessly enough, and opened it, never dreaming for a moment that it was anything other than what Mrs. Jakesway imagined it to be—a simple recommendation of myself as a tenant for the vacant rooms at Cliff Cottage. But it was something very different indeed, as I saw at once when I had made myself master of the spiky irregular hand in which it was written.

It was the note intended for Lady Fennel, which had been enclosed by Mrs. Winch in the wrong envelope!

It ran as follows:—
DEAR LADY SPENCER.—Be on your guard against the stranger who will come up to B'lair to-day to ask permission to take some photographs of the Hall. Refuse his request, and do not allow him to see Sir Philip. He is dangerous. He knows something but how much or how little I cannot at present tell. I am unable to see you, having just been summoned to the bedside of my mother, who is dying. Your Ladyship's devoted M. W. Burn this when read."

I sat staring at the letter like a man in a dream, till Mrs. Jakesway's shrill voice recalled me to the necessity of explaining my silence. "A hasty awkward hand to read, isn't it, sir?" said the old lady. "Puck now-a-days seem to know how badly they can write."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Jakesway," I replied very gravely, "but Mrs. Winch has evidently made a mistake in sending this note here. It is intended for Lady Spencer, to whom the note for you has probably been sent. If you will oblige me with a light, some sealing wax and an envelope, I will at once enclose it to the writer, and your maid can send it down to the *Hand and Dagger* some time in the course of the day."

I think it probable that the old lady would have demurred to my summary disposition of her note, but I spoke so authoritatively, and looked so grim and determined, that she was frustrated into submission, and gave me the articles I wanted without a word. I addressed the envelope to Mrs. Winch, and marked it with the word *Private*, and wrote inside: "With Mr. John Engle's compliments sent in take to C'liff Cottage," and then enclosed the note, and sealed it up in the presence of Mrs. Jakesway, who looked on in wondering silence, and promised faithfully that it should be delivered at the hotel in the course of the day. "If the mistress of the *Hand and Dagger* and I are to be enemies," I said to myself, "the war fare on my side at least shall be fair and above board."

Having completed all needful arrangements with regard to my apartments, I set out for Blair with a heart that beat more high and strenuously than usual. What did that woman mean by saying that I was dangerous? I at least was ignorant of my own power for harm. And why should I be dangerous to Lady Fennel, of all persons in the world, of whom every existence I was utterly ignorant three days before? Into the heart of what strange mystery was I about to plunge? Your question, but pondered so deeply as I walked up to Blair, that I had no eye for the beautiful scenery through the midst of which I was passing.

Here I sped at Blair, most haste for another reason. This one is no where easier, than that I am afraid you will never make to the end of it. It was now, old boy, and we have a good account of your health. Farewell.

Yours ever,

JAMES ENGLE.

TO BE CONTINUED.

ENGLIE.

The day comes up above the roads
A tall fellow from a night of rain;
The sound of feet, of wheels and hoofs
In the blurred street begin again.

The same old toll—no end—no aim!
The same old bairns in my ears,
The same unmeaning voices, the same
Most miserable search of tears.

The same vile sounds, the same dull lack
Of water in the level grass;
It's like the Yesterdays come back.
With the old things, and not To-day.

OWEN MAHANIE.

"I'm a young lady, while in her way to be married, was run over and killed. A confirmed old maid savagely remarked: 'She has arrived a more lingering and horrid destiny.'

THE WOMAN WHO CAN DRIVE A NAIL.

FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.

"I'm hanged if ever I saw one," says Ed! "Well, I didn't even see one either, but it won't do to admit that, if I'm to write about her. The masculine race would laugh so, and it's one thing I do hate above another, it's to let a man laugh at a woman. And I can derive nearly what a woman ought to be, if she could drive a nail. Besides, there isn't one woman in ten thousand who couldn't do it better than a man, if she wanted to."

Therefore I take my pen in hand, and stately, and with big, positive letters deserve to the *Woman Who Can Drive a Nail*.

She is the mother of ten small girl children. Her husband, in his day, was not what our grandmothers called "a good provider," nor by any means. In fact the only foolish thing she ever did was to marry him, a poor, shiftless soul, with not so much spring to him as a lump of dough. And he departed this life, leaving her with the numerous progeny above-mentioned, and nothing else. But she takes care of them, she does. Ten girl children are no bing in the eyes of a woman who can drive a nail. Bless you, no! She has more "family" than a dozen Yankee housekeepers. Her cow never goes unmilked of sight, her pig doesn't root into next door's garden, and her hens don't take liberties with the neighbor's early corn. You won't find a weed in her flower-beds, a broken-down tile in her back yard, nor a rat-hole under her kitchen door. She has not a leaky eave-trough, nor a loose clap board, nor a gap off his hinges about her premises.

Because she can drive a nail.

And I wish you could see her manage her hammer. She neither cracks her thumb, nor splits a board, nor breaks a nail. She always has the nail square on the head.

She is never behindhand and never in a hurry.

Nor was she ever, ever, out of patience or out of temper.

"Good humor is the health of the soul," says her poison, "Stanislaus, King of Poland," and the woman whom I deserve to you puts this maxime into practice entirely. Her spirit fairly runs over with bubbling, warm, rich life. She refuses to fret or worry about anything in this world. And she never faints for want of a nervous headache nor a hysterick in her life. She is plump and good-natured, with a merry bright eye, and a jolly, happy body. She helps everybody else out of trouble, but herself hardly ever wants help. She is merciful and charitable even to the dumb dog in the street. And there is not a shadow of anything spiteful or vindictive about her. She doesn't envy Mrs. Green either her back hair or her nice husband. Moreover, she wears her last winter's bonnet, which is the climax of independence in a woman. And the oldest inhabitants never heard her talk gossip.

Because she can drive a nail.

But don't think she is one of those easy, credulous souls whom sham distress in any form it pleases to take can impose upon. No indeed. Neither her head nor her heart is soft enough for that. She can look straight through a master from top to bottom, with an eye which convinces pretended misery that it had better tramp. And there is no such thing as feeling her in a bargain. Her wits are sharp enough to cope with a Chicago grain speculator. She is bright, keen, and active as a swimming-machine, and much cleverer. When she once makes up her mind that a certain thing is right, you can move her no more than a mountain. Also I haven't the least idea that she would make a submissive wife. That's the beauty of her. When and where you will, you will find her the same merry, wholesome, solid, dependable person, in a word, who will find her to be that matronly long-grown-a woman impossible Woman with no husband about her.

Because she is the woman who can drive a nail.

Zzz.

Music of Solomon's Temple.

The descriptions of Assyrian sculpture and the deciphering of Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions, have opened new fields of investigation in almost every department of knowledge. Among the branches of science which have shared in these discoveries, that of music has been benefited largely. The accounts of ancient musical instruments were vague, and our ideas, especially of Hebrew music, were confused, till recently judicious and penetrating researches brought to light what delineates the musical instruments of the early Oriental nations, and in a number of cases valuable specimens have been dissevered. Such, for example, is an Egyptian harp found in Thebes, with its strings yet perfect enough to vibrate again, after a silence of three thousand years.

The more recent investigations prove that the psalms of all known nations, since was Assyria from the Assyrians, the Hebrews, and the Egyptians, and, indeed, all other nations, share their knowledge of music. The uncivilized nations show that in the time of Solomon there was a highly cultured art and more advanced through generations. The polished nations used a harp of twenty-one strings, the frame of which was not too high, which accompanied musical songs or was borne in the dances. The lyre of Solomon, the double pipe, the trumpet, drum and bell were common. Even the beggars represented here have been discovered, though some of strange instruments like the viols played with the bare hands.

In all collections of social or worshipping assemblies, musical instruments were like our modern ones, have a prominent place. The Hebrews, since the time of the Exodus, were purely Egyptian, but it was much modified, so far as regards music, with Asiatic nations.

In the Temple of Jerusalem, according to the Talmud, stood a powerful organ, consisting of a wind chest with ten holes, containing ten pipes, each pipe capable of emitting ten different sounds by means of finger holes, so that a hundred sounds could be produced by it. It was provided with a twelfe set of bells and ten keys, so that it could be played with the fingers. According to the Rabbins, it could be heard a great distance from the Temple.

The day comes up above the roads
A tall fellow from a night of rain;

The sound of feet, of wheels and hoofs
In the blurred street begin again.

The same old toll—no end—no aim!

The same old bairns in my ears,

The same unmeaning voices, the same
Most miserable search of tears.

If you would interest newspaper readers, Mr. Young Author remember to be brief to be popular, to state facts, to eschew profane and the adjective, to condense, to garnish his article of your adventure, and to stop whistling your stock when the pub is reached.

AN ARTIST OF ABILITY.—W—— is an artist of great ability," said one. "I don't know," said another. "I am certain he is an artist of great originality."

UP HILL.

Does the road wind up hill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting place?

A roof for when the slow dark hours begin:

May not the darkness hide it from my face?

You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?

They will not keep you standing at the door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sores and weak?

Of labor you shall find the sun.

Will there be beds for me and all who seek?

Yes, beds for all who come.

I had just time to notice the look of surprise which ran round the yacht—a reproachful look, as I thought, from Muggie, a whistle of perplexity from Dr. Crab,—and they were gone, leaving me rocking about in my little boat, too vexed and mortified to think about taking to my oars, while Ned's was already several hundred yards behind. Never was such an unlucky meeting! To offend all my friends for the sake of an absurd piece of foolery like this! I could have cried with vexation, and boy-like—for, enigma, love-making, and all included, what was I but a boy?—I believe tears did come into my eyes as I pulled back slowly towards the silent and deserted lake. How dreary, to be sure, it looked, by comparison with the shore before!

Bare enough Lobley was in waiting. He had been lurking about all day, out of sight, and was padding gently up and down, near the head of the river, that I might be sure not to miss him a couple of minutes. No—it was a long, cool, steady stroke, which sent his boat through the water much faster than I wished, and in dead a little ahead of my own. "He can't surely keep it up," I thought, as I pulled doggedly on, trying to feel as unconscious as I had done at starting. It was no use. I was getting excited in spite of myself. What I to do? Get out, and have to resign the priz just as I had it fairly within my grasp! I sat all for the sake of a quiet piece of folly! I clenched my teeth, and sprang more vigorously than I had done a few hours before for the Ladies' Cup. Ah! well done. I had no occasion to look sideways. Lobley was behind, and his strokes were shorter and more jerky. He had caught the infection. "Brave! let him only tax his strength to the utmost, and we should see whether my trained muscles would not even endure this fourth strain better than those which had never been tried at an ear for months. Spur away harder than ever. Lobley followed suit.

"I am as much obliged to you for this, Tombe," he said, as I rowed alongside. "You are really a very good natured fellow."

"Never mind blaming," I said, shortly. "Let us get the thing over, and have done with it. Where is it to be?"

He pointed out the road he had fixed upon.

The finish was at a small island, nearly half a mile from shore. It was not a particularly stiff pull, and even if it had been, I was too intent on getting back to Athlone to care about it. Without a word I rowed to the starting-point.

"Here, old fellow, I brought a flask with me, in case you should be tired," said Lobley, who was provokingly civil. "It'll do you good."

"Don't want Ditch courage. I can beat you without that, never fear. Do you wait for any start?"

"Not a yard," replied Lobley, in the same grave tone and manner. "Recollect, Tombe, you consented of your own free will to this arrangement; so it's fair to get in a race about it. After all, you know you can beat me; you said so a moment ago; and if you do, I have promised not to think of Maggie again. That is, if I can help it," added the poor fellow, deprecatingly.

I was a bit vexed with myself, but did not like to show it.

"Well, come on then," I said, and we both settled ourselves for a start.

But to start fairly was no easy task. There was a considerable under current flowing towards the Shannon, and both the boats began to drift away from the island while we prepared for action. After a minute's deliberation we hit on a somewhat novel idea. Each was to land, and stand close to the water's edge, holding his boat by the painter. Then, at a given signal, we were to embark, get out ears, and pull away in the best and quickest manner we could. It was Lobley's notion, and I rather liked it. No sooner thought of than done, and there we were, a few paces from one another, holding in our boats close to shore, while a solitary water-fowl, who was swimming about fifty yards off, stared at us as he knew there was something funny about us.

"Are you ready?" I said, impatiently. "It is to be one—two—three—and away!"

"No, no. The one who speaks has the advantage. I had rather have some independent signal."

"What does the man mean? Are we to wait till someone comes from Athlone to start us?"

"Don't be in a hurry, Tombe. Do you see that water-fowl?"

"Well."

"When it ducks or flies away, which it is sure to do directly, then we will be off."

Without more ado we stood and waited. The waterfowl floated quietly in easy ease, looking at us with its head a little to one side, without any intention apparently of putting itself to the slightest exertion.

"What hubub is that?" I exclaimed at last.

"Lobley, we shall be out all night at this rate!"

He made no answer, but stood with his eyes fixed on the bird, evidently prepared for a spring.

"It was no use. I watched again. The brute was washing itself, dipping its head into the water, and shaking the drops off its feathers. But never a duck and never a fly."

"Why, the wretched is going to bed," I said again, "and this is its way of undressing."

Still no answer. Lobley was too much in earnest to joke.

I seated myself on the grass in a sort of bridle, still keeping hold of the painter. "It will take to your legs, I don't and won't. That bird will stay out of sight before we get a rise or fall out of it. It is having a rise out of, instead." I added, with a lame attempt at a pun.

"Come, Lobley, don't be an ass. Get into your boat. I'll give you thirty seconds clear start—then."

"We start fair, or not at all," he said, with a surly turn of the head.

"Then I shall be back and snore a bit. Won't you awake me as you go, there's a good fellow."

I put my head back on the soft grass as I spoke, not to sleep, but to fix my rival by showing how stale I thought of his possible chance of winning.

Another minute passed. It was Lobley this time who broke the silence.

"Tombe, I am very sorry, but I must a moment's grace. My coat is getting wet."

It was indeed. Fung cushioned over the stern of the boat, it had slipped gradually into the water through some weight in one of the pockets, or been flung over the side through its owner's nervous endeavor to keep the boat steady in one position. I had to hold both paddlers while he pulled it up and shook it out. A couple of misgivings passed before we returned our aid, paddlers, and then we both pulled out for the dock.

"What? You are too late! The duck had disappeared. While we had been here to hold either gates or flowers away. There was not a feather of him to be seen. That was too ridiculous. I burst into a fit of laughter. Even Lobley smiled.

"Come," said I, "I'm off, anyhow. You may come if you like. I shall start, and if you choose to wait any longer, I shall row over the course by myself, that's all!"

We jumped into our boats without more delay.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RACE FOR A WIFE.

"Your room is one day. Through I have my back action; and I verily believe my left arm will be useless for a week or more. This boat is in as heavy as lead, and I deduce it is better now it has been all day."

I did not exactly say all this, good reader.

Breath is too precious at such a time to be wasted. But such were my thoughts. It was heavier work than I had bargained for. Lobley pulled well, too,—better than I could have given him credit for. They were no hurried, jerky strokes which he took. I had half expected to see him tug away rapidly, and tire himself out in a couple of minutes. No, it was a long, cool, steady stroke, which sent his boat through the water much faster than I wished, and in dead a little ahead of my own.

"He can't surely keep it up," I thought, as I pulled doggedly on, trying to feel as unconscious as I had done at starting. It was no use. I was getting excited in spite of myself. What I to do? Get out, and have to resign the priz just as I had it fairly within my grasp!

I sat all for the sake of a quiet piece of folly!

I clenched my teeth, and sprang more vigorously than I had done a few hours before for the Ladies' Cup.

Ah! well done. I had no occasion to look sideways.

Lobley was behind, and his strokes were shorter and more jerky. He had caught the infection.

"Brave! let him only tax his strength to the utmost, and we should see whether my trained muscles would not even endure this fourth strain better than those which had never been tried at an ear for months.

Spur away harder than ever. Lobley followed suit.

The perspiration fell in drops from my burning forehead. Never mind, I could see Lobley's face positively glowing, actually a white heat, as he cast anxious glances from time to time over his shoulder. I had frightened him out of that dangerously cool, steady, long stroke. He was exhausting himself without gaining an inch more ground.

"Here, old fellow, I brought a flask with me, in case you should be tired," said Lobley, who was provokingly civil.

"It's well you did bring it along with you," I said, "but I have no occasion to look sideways.

"I am as much obliged to you for this, Tombe," he said, as I rowed alongside.

"Never mind blaming," I said, shortly.

"Let us get the thing over, and have done with it. Where is it to be?"

He pointed out the road he had fixed upon.

The

